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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 003067

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU/CHINA ARMS EMBARGO: POLDIR ON NOV
22 GAERC

REF: THE HAGUE 3011

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD M. SOBEL FOR REASONS 1
.4 (B AND D)

1. (C) Ambassador Sobel discussed the EU China arms embargo with MFA PolDir Hugo Siblesz on November 22; specifically the reference to the EU's intention to send a "positive signal" to China. Siblesz said the PRC had requested reference be made to the embargo in the EU-China Summit Communiqué. Accordingly, the thinking during the EU FM's November 22 lunch was to note "progress" but also cite "areas of concern." Siblesz underscored that there had been no change in the Dutch position (i.e., timing and conditions do not merit a lift, but the GONL will not block consensus). He said that Denmark, Sweden and -- on a limited basis -- the Czech Republic have reservations about a lift. There is also significant sensitivity with regard to the timing of the Taiwan elections. Siblesz felt the British were the key to the current situation and that a softening of their position could change the dynamics towards a quick lift. Siblesz said the Dutch had given indications of the sort of steps that the Chinese needed to take to move the process forward such as releasing individuals detained in relation to Tiananmen Square or signing the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights. DCM also spoke with DepPolDir Herman Schaper on November 23 who said that FM Bot's characterization of the EU's "concerns" as "conditions" in his public statements had caused confusion. MFA says these are not in fact conditions, noting adamant Chinese opposition to such a characterization.

2. (C) Comment: The Dutch understand that the U.S. believes the "positive signal" coming out of the November 22 GAERC goes one step further than we anticipated, but they seem to believe that references to addressing human rights concerns and strengthening the "toolbox" for post-embargo countries create enough obstacles to make a lift of the embargo unlikely before the end of their presidency. FM Bot told the Ambassador recently (reftel) the Dutch hope to get past the December 17 European council meeting without a decision and put the matter into Luxembourg's presidency. End Comment.
SOBEL